

October 11, 1999

Honorable King County Councilmembers
and the People of King County

I am pleased to submit to you the Executive Proposed Budget for 2000. King County faces unique challenges since we are a metropolitan government working to accommodate regional needs. We have increasing responsibilities, particularly in the areas of criminal justice, transportation, growth management and the environment. Given the realities of increased demand for services and decreasing revenues, I want to give credit to County department directors and staffs for their hard work in setting priorities and making difficult cuts where necessary.

In 2000, the King County Budget totals more than \$2.6 billion and 13,523 FTEs. Of this amount, \$450 million and 4,442 FTEs are contained in the Current Expense Fund which pays for direct services of jails, police, parks, human services, and administrative departments. Non-CX operating funds total to \$1.4 billion and include functions such as transit, roads, solid waste, wastewater treatment, water and land resources, public health, airport, stadium and a variety of internal service funds. \$766 million is committed to capital improvements in the areas of transit, roads, wastewater, parks, and other major public facilities.

For the third year in a row, and as the first and only County Executive ever to do so in each year of his administration, I am delivering a budget below existing property tax levels, thereby lowering the tax burden on our residents. And, while the County Council had requested a financial plan that came in at 104 percent, today I am presenting a budget even below that level – at 103.5 percent – a year ahead of the Council's target date.

The Proposed 2000 budget does not assume passage of Initiative 695. If this initiative is approved, Motor Vehicle Excise Tax revenues that support criminal justice, public health and transit services in the County will decrease by approximately \$122 million in 2001 which is the first year the full impact will be felt. Also included in this initiative is a restriction that requires a public vote to raise many types of fees and taxes. If the voters approve the passage of I-695, I will transmit a Revised Budget on November 3, 1999 that will detail the programmatic changes needed to accommodate the reduced MVET revenues.

The major initiatives included in the 2000 budget are listed below. These programs are also outlined in greater detail in the "Strategic Choices" section which follows this letter as well as in each program chapter of the budget book. The major initiatives are:

- *Steadily Increasing Workload for Criminal Justice* - As the population increases in King County, new laws and increased sanctions for criminal behavior place additional demands on courts, jails and rehabilitation programs. Examples of growth in the Criminal Justice area in the 2000 budget include:

The *Sheriff's Office* budget reflects additional funding of \$6 million and 42 new FTEs, with funds for overtime and enhancements to the sexual offenders registration program.

Superior Court receives \$122,000 to fund an additional judge and bailiff to help accommodate the increasing civil and criminal workload, and \$403,053 for judicial salary and class/comp increases.

District Court receives \$145,000 to implement city contracts and \$125,000 to enable improved tracking of bench warrants and no contact orders as well as to update court records within 24 hours.

The *Law Library* receives \$162,000 to assist in the management of its fiscal issues while pursuing State legislative relief.

The *Prosecuting Attorney's Office* receives three Crime Victim Advocates to handle victim restitution, juvenile court, and domestic violence cases, four additional positions in the Civil Division to handle transportation, wastewater and land use issues, and one new position to administer drug property seizures.

Public Defenders receive the first installment of phased increases to bring parity in the payment rates for Assigned Counsel attorneys and for paraprofessional staff in the four defender agencies.

Judicial Administration receives funding to continue the implementation of electronic court records which will ultimately allow attorneys to file court papers electronically and criminal justice agencies to access this information.

The *Department of Youth Services* budget adds \$222,000 and five new positions to enhance and strengthen juvenile probation. The budget also includes funding for Phase 2 of the Juvenile Justice Operational Master Plan.

- *Integrating Health and Human Services* - The 2000 budget includes \$300,000 for a pilot program which will assess the effects of increased salary and benefit levels upon the quality of childcare. Also, new prevention programs totaling \$720,000 will provide parent and job readiness training, improve coordination between advocate agencies for domestic violence, mental health, childcare, and Child Protective Services, and also provide training and employment opportunities for youth involved in gangs.

- *Public Health Programs* – The 2000 budget includes \$173,000 and 3 new positions for the communicable diseases section to enable the County to be more proactive in analyzing disease trends. Increases are also included for the laboratory which handles outbreak situations, and funding for prevention and counseling efforts to help decrease the transmission of STDs/HIV. \$1.3 million has been awarded to fund breast and cervical health services in King and Snohomish Counties, and \$1.28 million is included to increase Medicaid outreach and to fund efforts to decrease infant mortality in the African American and Native American communities.
- *Smart Growth Initiative* – The aims of this initiative are to manage growth for today and into the next century. This initiative encompasses the areas of transportation, livable communities, protecting the environment and the rural legacy.
- *Transit Oriented Development* - The 2000 budget includes the completion of negotiations for the Renton transit center, the construction of a bus layover in the Northgate transit center, and finalizing agreements with City of Seattle for the sale of the 5th Avenue Park and Ride lot.
- *Sound Transit (ST)* - The integration of Sound Transit services will result in the following estimated impacts to the CIP budget: additional fleet required to maintain schedules while operating on surface streets during and after tunnel closure, acquisition of 20 additional articulated coaches to offset the dual-powered coaches being dedicated to ST service, expansion of base capacity to accommodate the ST fleet, and payment for the purchase of the tunnel beginning in September of 2004.
- *Paratransit Policies & Fares* - During 1999, the policies for the paratransit program were revised which, coupled with a proposed 2000 fare increase, result in reduced demand for paratransit vehicles. The goal of increasing the number of accessible taxicabs to 10 percent of the taxi fleet would further reduce reliance on paratransit services. This proposed project would purchase a total of 75 vehicles to be assigned to taxi providers who agree to charge the same fare for people with disabilities as without.
- *Parks* - Over \$6.2 million in new bond funding is allocated to ballfield projects, and new development or rehabilitation is planned for several sites including Marymoor, Fort Dent, Highline, Ravensdale, and Tahoma.
- *Endangered Species Act Initiative* - As a result of the listing of the Chinook Salmon as “threatened” under the federal Endangered Species Act, \$10.5 million is included in the 2000 budget to increase regional environmental coordination in King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties. King County’s ESA Policy Office has responded to this listing by publishing a response titled “The Return of the King.” The ESA Office is also finalizing negotiations with federal agencies on a 4(d) rule which will govern environmental and development activities in King County and the Tri-County area.
- *News DDES Fee Structure* - The Department of Development and Environmental Services adopted a new fee structure in 1999. Previously, many fees did not recover

costs, while many other fee revenues exceeded the cost of production which resulted in an unstable financial performance and a fund that is in a deficit position. With the new fee system that emphasizes cost recovery now in place, the department projects that it will achieve a positive fund balance in 2000.

- *Investments in Technology and Training* – \$1 million has been included to fund high priority personal computer replacements in Current Expense agencies. An existing \$1.3 million will be used for the Law, Safety, and Justice Integration Project. The 2000 budget also includes curriculum development for fifteen new training courses designed to develop professional skills in order to achieve a high performance organization.
- *New Financial System* - Over the course of the year 2000, the County's new financial systems will commence operations and the legacy financial systems will be phased out, and Finance's budget was increased by \$1.7 million to accommodate this transition.
- *Closing of the Stadium* - The 2000 budget includes the costs associated with the closure of the Kingdome. The completion of administrative closeout activities necessitate the funding of a small staff for an estimated three-month period. I committed to placing Kingdome staff in other County positions with the goal of no staff layoffs associated with the Kingdome's closure. My 2000 budget reflects those commitments.

As an addendum to the Proposed Budget, I am recommending to the Council that the Department of Youth Services (DYS) be split up into the following three divisions, Juvenile Court Services, Juvenile Detention, and Maintenance. These pieces would be transferred to Superior Court, the Department of Adult Detention, and the Department of Construction and Facility Management, respectively. This reorganization facilitates better management of the two major functions of DYS.

I look forward to working with the Metropolitan King County Council to adopt a 2000 budget for this government that recognizes the compelling requirements of a vital regional government.

Sincerely,

Ron Sims
King County Executive